

Section D-5

Working with Volunteers

The contents of this Toolkit have been developed to assist you in your efforts to support family readiness. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided is current and accurate. However, because statutory and regulatory changes may have occurred since the publication of this Toolkit, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs cannot assume responsibility for its continued accuracy. Before taking any significant action based on the contents of this Toolkit, you should contact a subject matter expert in your chain of command to secure the most current information.

Working with Volunteers

Family readiness programs have limited funding and staffing. Program staffing is never sufficient to meet program requirements. Consequently, volunteers are critical to the success and effectiveness of family readiness programs. Volunteer opportunities in family readiness programs and family readiness groups (FRGs) are limited only by the interest, skills, and time a volunteer is willing to commit to the organization. Family members and retirees can volunteer in almost any capacity from unit level fundraising to participation in regional Guard and Reserve Volunteer Advisory Councils (VAC).

VACs support the entire Reserve component community – military members, military retirees, family members, and authorized civilians. The role of the VAC is to advise and assist the Guard or Reserve component on policy issues that impact families and readiness. They also provide feedback and recommendations for program improvement to leadership as well as supporting family readiness goals to enhance readiness and retention.

Many leadership volunteer positions such as FRG leader, Ombudsman, and VAC member are appointed positions. Interested volunteers must fill out an application, provide references, and may be required to submit a resume. As the family readiness program director/manager you may be in the position to select, interview, and/or recommend an individual for a specific volunteer position. Take the opportunity seriously. The prospective volunteer is someone with whom you may be working closely. Volunteers ultimately represent you and the family readiness program. They serve the command's families and will have a direct impact on family and mission readiness.

Seek a wide pool of applicants. Ask individuals you know who may be interested and qualified. Advertise the position using newsletters, web sites, and other means of communication. Make sure your advertisements include the duties, required qualifications, and responsibilities of the position.

Live by the golden rule. Treat others as you would like to be treated. Be considerate of time when working with volunteers. Time management is as important to them as it is to you. Be on time for your interview. Demonstrate good communication and listening skills and be professional. Listen to their needs and interests and inform them of the family readiness program goals and opportunities. It will help both of you find a better match for a volunteer position. Plan ahead and think through what qualifications and personal criteria you are looking for to meet the needs of the family readiness program. Look for potential. Some personal qualities to consider when seeking a volunteer:

- A person who has the time and energy for the position you are seeking to fill.
- Someone who can maintain confidentiality.
- A team player, outgoing, self-confident, able to work well with others.
- A “do-er” – someone who derives satisfaction from getting involved.

- A good role model; someone who will be credible with the spouses and the command.
- Someone who is positive and realistic about military life.
- An optimistic person who is willing to voice ideas.
- A caring individual with good communication skills.

Since you may not be in a position to select, train, mentor, and supervise all volunteers, make sure that you prepare others to do the job right. Leadership is a learned skill. Prepare your volunteer leaders to build and sustain a robust volunteer program. Volunteer management is an important skill. Sections A-2-4 through sections A-2-7 in the Toolkit Commander's TAB discuss five major components for an effective volunteer program: recruitment, retention, clear and concise job descriptions, training opportunities, and recognition. We want family members to understand the benefits and rewards of volunteering. Consequently, volunteering is specifically addressed in Section C-1-4-1 of the Family Member TAB.

Volunteers share a precious commodity with FRGs and family readiness programs – time and commitment. Treat volunteer positions with equal emphasis as paid positions. Provide an orientation and training development opportunities. Recognize and reward their efforts. The potential for family readiness programs to make our communities and military lifestyle better for everyone is unlimited, provided the unit and family readiness program are committed to making the partnership a success. Reap the benefits of the wide-ranging talents of volunteers. The family readiness program and families will greatly benefit from volunteer efforts.